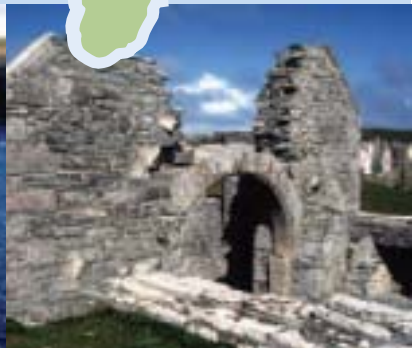
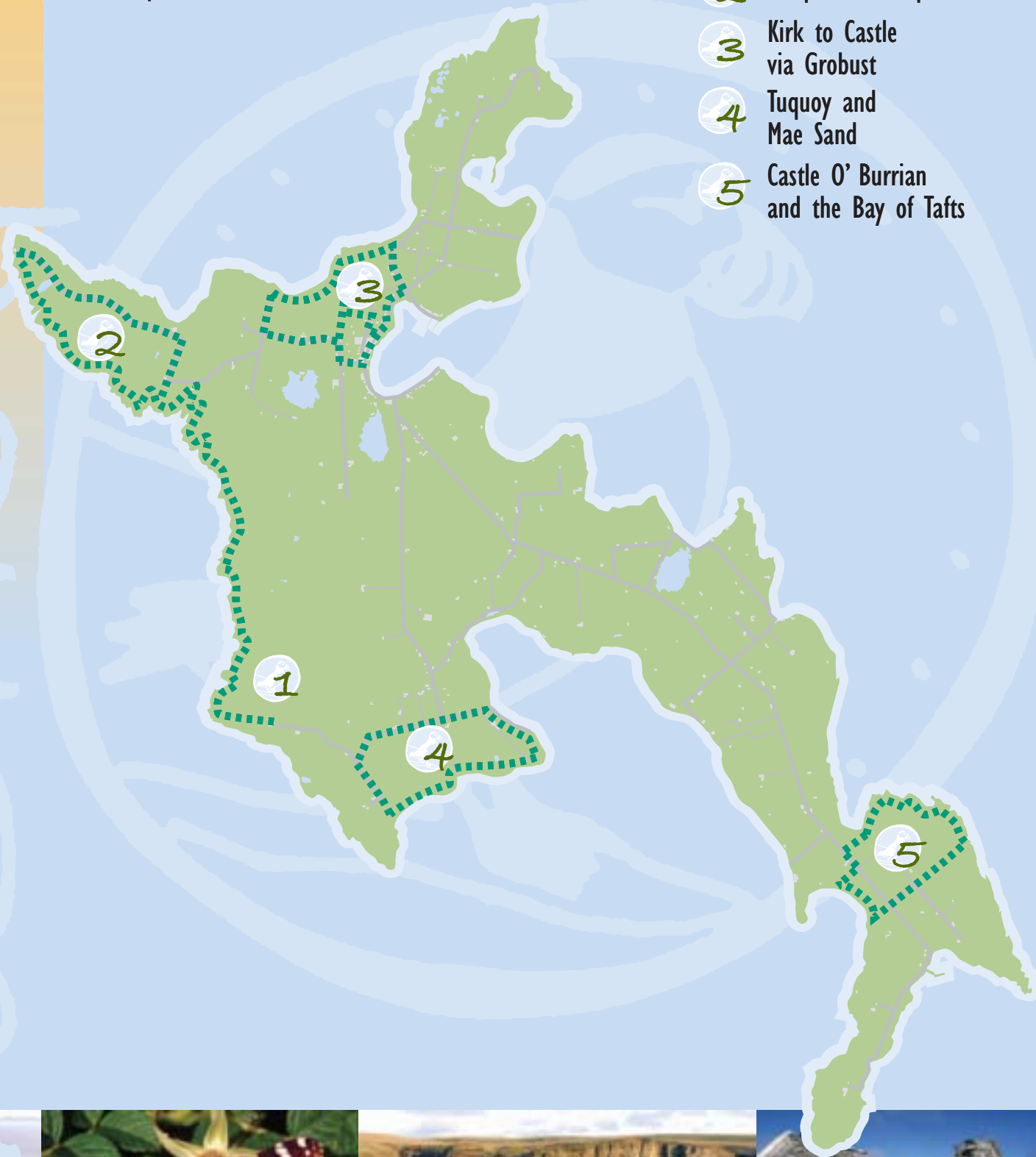


5 Guided Walks for the Island of Westray with information and illustrations on points of interest

-  1 West Westray Coast
-  2 Noup Head Loop
-  3 Kirk to Castle via Grobust
-  4 Tuquoy and Mae Sand
-  5 Castle O' Burrian and the Bay of Tafts



Walking Guide

Rich farmland, dramatic coastline and abundant wildlife . . .

The changing scenery, the wide sea and skylscapes make a short stroll or a long hike a delight not to be missed. You never quite know what you might see next. The air can be full of birds, the tide may have washed up a beautiful sea urchin or a message in a bottle, and the wild flowers can take you by surprise as they brighten your path.

Westray is the most north-westerly of the Orkney Islands. Its spreading shape provides it with a huge 80km coastline, with stunning cliff scenery and beautiful sandy bays, while its oceanic position, facing the Atlantic, gives a clue to its rich seafaring history.



The rocks of the island are made up of thick layers of flagstones, which have been much used for paving stones, roofing slates and buildings since prehistoric times.

Walking through history

Westray has an extensive pre history, with new sites still being discovered. Recent excavations include two Viking longhouses, at Trenabie and Langskaill. At Knowe of Skea, an Iron Age funerary complex was found, containing 100 human burials. In years past digs have uncovered a Skara Brae type Neolithic house and a chambered tomb similar to Maeshowe.



The Vikings found Pierowall to be a fine natural harbour for their shallow-draughted long boats and named it Höfn meaning harbour. It was

then the only Norse village in Orkney and nearby on the Links, was the largest Viking cemetery in Britain yet found.



Other evidence of the Norse occupation can be seen at the Cross Kirk, built in 1140 by Hafliði, son of Thorkel. The remains jutting out of the cliff to the west of the church are thought to be his house and farmstead.

For more recent history Noltland Castle is well worth a visit. It's one of the finest examples of a Scottish fortified residence. It was built for Gilbert Balfour, who served Mary Queen of Scots and aided in the plot to murder her second husband Lord Darnley. The fearsome appearance is accentuated by the huge blocks of stone, array of shot holes and few windows. The large spiral staircase is the most spectacular feature, with a smaller one higher up in the living area of the castle.

After a long history of fishing Westray's economy now relies more on farming than fishing. Creel boats still fish for crabs, but beef and sheep farming have gradually gained in importance. The soils are fertile, the grass is good with a long growing season and the beef is acclaimed throughout Britain.

Today Pierowall harbour is busiest at the end of July when dozens of small boats take over the bay in fine style for the Westray Regatta.



What's the finest bird in any flock?
Have you heard of a Westray Aak?



WESTRAY